# Flying Snake

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**Alpine Newt in Macclesfield © Banks Vic**

**Alpine Newts in Macclesfield . Some flying snake reports . Crocodile under Welsh school . Sugar Glider in London . Messages in bottles . Goats behaving badly . Wolf in Somerset . More Ostrich egg strangeness . Shark with giant bite on body . Ozark Howler**

## FLYING SNAKE SUBSCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

## ESTABLISHED BY RICHARD MUIRHEAD AKA DR DEVO IN 2011

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# Dr Devo`s Diary

Hello again and welcome to another issue of Flying Snake. First of all I would like to thank Richard George for kindly mentioning my name and Flying Snake at the end of his essay in the March 2022 issue of Fortean Times. I would also like to thank Fortean Times cartoonist Hunt Emerson for including his cartoon about Flying Snake issue in his new (as of April 2022) collection of cartoons Phenomenomix which I bought at Weird Weekend at the beginning of April. Meanwhile I have been going on with my regular work at Oxfam,Macclesfield and collecting data for inclusion in this issue 23 of Flying Snake and not only me but also Ulrich Magin who provided a round up of flying snake reports and Kate Shaw who provided an unusual snake story from Tennessee in 1908. I also want to thank Dr Karl Shuker for allowing me to include his Shuker Nature blog for May 12th 2014 `Pegasi Pliny`s Horse Headed Mystery Birds` and Loes Modderman for allowing me to use her essay on the Goblin of the Loaf. Shane Lea and I have included a study on the controversial Ozark Howler.

Between April 22nd and 28th I visited my friends Bob and Margaret Skinner in Surrey before travelling on to Devon to meet long time friend Jon Downes in Woolsey. Whilst in London on April 22nd I visited the News Room at the British Library for a very successful afternoon`s research where I was very fortunate to find another Macau crocodile story from 1906 (the other one being in the 1960s if my memory serves me correctly) which confirms to Jon and my minds that crocodiles have been not infrequent visitors to the South China coast over many years. I also found an amusing story about a "warbling toad" in Cornwall in around 1911 from Country Life magazine though sadly the quality of the print-out from the database is so poor that I cannot include the story in this issue of Flying Snake,maybe next issue if I can get a decent copy via inter-library loan. Finally, enjoy issue 23 of FS!

# Some Flying Snakes

## Ulrich Magin

In the course of time, I come across references to flying snakes or snakes with wings that I note down with a quick thought to our esteemed Mr Muirhead. I have quite a bag of such reports, and think they might come handy for the magazine. I just list the cases and comment only when necessary, but would not draw too many conclusions from old and dusty newspaper stories.
As a rule, I have only those flying snakes which may represent a zoological enigma – not any of the known species of gliding snakes (although we will have some borderland cases).

***Tazelwurms with wings***

In the last 20 years, I did a massive trawl of the literature to finally write my book on the tazelwurm, the large Alpine lizard, newt or snake /pick your choice) which lists some 430 individual sightings. In parts of the Alps, the tatzelwurm is known as Springwurm, or jumping snake, and some of these reports imagine a serpent with wings. (For more info on how complex this cryptid actually is, see my book "Der Tatzelwurm: Porträt eines Alpenphantoms" (Edition Raetia; 2020). From this file come my first examples.
The first snake did not need wings to fly, it just jumped very far. This case was reported by Scheuchzer, the famous Swiss naturalist, in 1746 (p. 235–236):
"What is very strange is what Mr. Peter von Juvat, pastor of Stul in the court Bergum, told me in a letter of October 29, 1702: 'It happened in the year 1696, at the beginning of August, when the cowherd Bartolome Alegro de Ponte, from the region Plurs, drove the cows up the Joppatsch mountain to the meadow, saw on the summit of the mountain, which he climbed alone, in a deep pit (in un garan Fopp) a coiled beast, which was silent and looked red from the rays of the sun. The shepherd, who was eager to see this monster right, goes closer. Soon he saw the animal coiled up and with an erect body, about two

cubits long, with a somewhat compressed cat's head, which was red and hairy, with sparkling eyes, and a white stripe around its neck. Instead of feet it had scales like a fish [or fins like a fish], a tongue like a snake, and a tail divided into two. Frightened by this sight, the shepherd tried to escape to safety; but the beast pursued him with swift movement. The shepherd fled behind a hill, over which the dragon could not come, but it writhed and whelped furiously around the hill. In the meantime the man reaches for his rifle, which the alpine shepherds often carry with them, and shoots the beast with a bullet; but it was not dead from it, but pursued its enemy, at whom it shot like an arrow in a straight line; but he killed his by throwing stones at it. Three days afterwards the carcass of the animal was found completely rotten, on which a many flies sat. The residents of this mountain testify that one often saw such dragons flying like arrows from the mountain Foppatsch to the Urgeis [a rock]."

In 1790, a man observed such flying snakes in a mountain lake near Plan-Névé, Vaud, Switzerland. "An old climber from the mountains of Ollon also told me that his father often spoke to him on face to face about this winged dragon that he himself saw in 1790 and that left the walls of Plan-Névé and Plan-Névé by the Muveran, then soared into the air, where it described immeasurable outlines, finally hiding behind the peak on the Favre, vomiting flames and sparks." (Cérésole, Alfred: *Légendes des Alpes vaudoises*. Lausanne 1885, p. 156) this may have been a meteor, described in terms of a dragon.

In the 1930s, several hunts search for a tatzelwurm. One report of the time says: "About thirty years ago, in the Bernese Oberland, I asked an old mountain hunter and farmer to tell me about his hunting experiences. The hunter told me that there used to be flying dragons or stollenworms [a Swiss name for the tazelwurm, from Stollen = tiny feet] on the Oltschi. When I shook my head in disbelief, he almost got angry and said to me, 'It's already so'. Those dragons would have attacked you. These worms are said to shoot at you [jump like an arrow], especially if you are climbing around in an exposed area on the Oltschi [a plateau just south of Lake Brienz]. Once or twice, when he was climbing on the rocks in the evening, a dragon jumped or flew at him. He was almost unable to protect himself from this animal, all the more so since it mainly flew into his head. He is afraid of this Oltschi and doesn't like to go up this mountain." (Dübi: Von Drachen und Stollenwürmern. *Archives suisses des traditions populaires*,

vol 37, Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Volkskunde, 1940, p. 164)

***Some flying snakes of Europe***

Flying vipers are well known in the legends of the Vaud in Switzerland (*Sagenhafte Zeiten*, 6/2004, p. 4), and in Spain, very large snakes with a head the size of a baby (or with a child's head, including a mane) are regularly seen, in the south there are reports of the Saetón, a large, highly poisonous snake with a hypnotic look that jumps at the witnesses and the can fly. To inject its poison, the snake lies on its head and straightens its pointed rear end. (*ABC*, Seville, 15 January 1982, p. 9). Another example, from Bulgaria, has been extensively noticed in the fortean literature (see Clark: *Unexplained!*, p. 495; Karl Shuker in *Strange* 17, p. 26–27; *Fortean Times* 78, p. 57, *Fortean Times* 123, p. 46, *Fortean Times* 257, p. 73)

To come back to Spain, Paul Seaburn, on http://mysteriousuniverse.org/2017/08/living-gargoyle-reportedly-seen-flying-in-spain/ (18 August 2017), has another case:

'The report comes from *Cryptozoology News* which interviewed Alex Nasirc, a British man who claims he saw the creature while living in Santa Maria Del Aguila, Almeria, in southern Spain in September 2010. Nasirc says he heard an unidentifiable sound around 1 am that he feared might be a woman shrieking in pain. Looking out of his fourth-story window, he saw a large winged creature about 25 meters (82 feet) away take off from the building and fly off. He didn't think he had time for a photo (damn) but committed this description to memory:

"Thick, short beak. It looked like a carnivores' nose. The head seemed to be stretched at the back. Bulky torso or body. Curved wings with arms look alike. Span around 2 to 3 meters wide — about 9 to 10 feet –. Thick, powerful back legs that were held diagonally, almost vertically. Long, thin tail. Heavy, slow movement. Pale pink color. Size of a massive dog or a big feline like tiger or lion. It looked like skin texture. No feathers. No scales. It almost moved like a robot."

'***The Mount Hawke bird***

This sighting has been argued as an early sighting of owlman, but I have looked it up and it is no owlman and no flying dinosaur, although perhaps some reader can identify it:

"Boys attacked by strange birds – Unpleasant Experience near Porthtowan – While proceeding along a road on Sunday [i.e. 30 May]

evening, midway between Mount Hawke and Porthtowan, two lads had their attention drawn to something fluttering on top of a mine burrow. The younger boy ascended the burrow to ascertain what it was, and on finding a large bird, apparently dead, proceeded to examine it. The boy was instantly attacked, and ran back to his brother, who just managed to throw his coat over the bird to prevent any injuries being done. The bird, however, escaped from the coat and attacked the elder boy, who defended himself with a stick, and eventually killed the bird, but not before he had received a severe bite on the hand.

The bird measured 6 ft 3 in in length [maybe the span of the wings?]. It had a powerful pointed beak 6 in in length, short legs, full webbed feet striped with green and yellow, and a duck shaped body. The plumage was of cream colour, tingled with brown on the back, and also on the upper wing-coverts, the tips of the wing being black. The bird had a severe wound under the right wing, which, no doubt, had caused it much pain, and must have infuriated it. The creature was in a very poor condition, and, owing to rapid decay, was soon buried. Many villagers saw the bird, but none were able to name it." (*Cornish Echo*, 4 June 1926, p 6)

***Far from Europe***

In 1905, we learn about a flying snake that was killed I the US:

"A FLYING SNAKE. CURIOUS REPTILE WITH WINGS. A most remarkable and uncommon 'flying snake' was recently captured and killed at Berry Plain, near Comorn, Virginia, and has attracted wide attention. The curious reptile was first noticed flying about in the air, presenting the appearance of an ordinary snake attached to a strange looking bird.

As far as is known, it never once descended to the earth, and crawled on the ground after the manner of snakes, but it would occasionally alight in trees and catch such birds as best suited its fancy It was finally killed, and proved to be five feet long and about 1in. in diameter of body. It had wings of good size covered with feathers." (*Pelorus Guardian and Miners' Advocate*, New Zealand, 19 June 1906, p 7. The same story can also be found in the *North Otago Times*, 27 December 1905, p 2 (Supplement) and the *Lake Wakatip Mail*, 12 January 1906, p 2)

In 1922, a flying monster snake terrorized the Mediterranean – but we may safely conclude this was a hoax, although the story appeared in newspapers of New Zealand, the United states, and Germany, and there may well be more.

It runs like this:

“SEA SERPENTS. WILD STORIES FROM THE LEVANT. FISHERMEN TERRIFIED.

After a long absence, the sea serpent has appeared once more, says the ‘New York Times.’ According to reports just received from Constantinople and Smyrna, the elusive reptile is disporting himself in the placid waters of the Mediterranean, terrifying fishermen and crews of the feluccas and other small craft which ply along the shores of the Levant.

The most thrilling story was brought to New York by officers of the National Greek liner Constantinople, who said that motor launches armed with one pounder quick-firing guns were searching the Sea of Marmora for a winged marine monster which had been sighted circling Dog Island at great speed for three or four days. When it rose from the sea and flew over San Stefano toward the city of Stamboul it was reported to have made a booming sound like the German triplanes that flow over Paris during the war. How the huge marine monster passed through the Dardanelles without causing a big wash along the shore has not yet been discovered.

Officers on the Constantinople said that the flying sea serpent was first reported off the ancient port of Chalcis in the Aegean Sea, and so alarmed the sponge divers that an appeal was sent to Athens to send a gunboat to search for the monster and destroy it. When the commander of the fort fired a gun in the direction indicated by the scared sponge divers the serpent rose to an altitude of about 5000"feet and flew away toward the port of Smyrna, Asia Minor, where it was eported next day to have sunk two caciques laden with figs and pistachio nuts.

Zubdee Effendi, a Turkish rug- merchant, who arrived from Smyrna on the liner, said he saw the scaly-winged monster quite plainly which was crossing the bay to its home on one of the islands. When the head rose from the surface of the water, he said, all the natives on board flung themselves on the deck and prayed, while the vessel rocked wildly and the sea was covered with white foam as if it was being violently agitated underneath.

The head of the nautical reptile was fully ten feet across, with two enormous reddish green eyes jutting out on either bow like a ship's sidelights, while its immense flappers looked as if they easily weighed a ton each. Its beam across the middle of the back, which rose high out of the water, Zubdee Effendi continued, was fifteen feet and the length over all was fully fifty feet. When the sea serpent turned its head toward the boat the heat on deck became unbearable, said the Turkish rug merchant. He felt that his beard was shrivelling up. Finally the monster dived, flung its huge tail into the air with a swish that nearly sent the small schooner over on its beam ends; and then disappeared from view.

Within a few days the flying sea, serpent, Zubdee Effendi said, was reported off the mouth of the Nile at Marietta, the port of Candia in Crete, and off the island of Mitilene, where it was stated to have rammed and sunk a felucca laden with currants because one of the crew struck the reptile in the eye with a pomegranate. Sponge divers and pearl fishers in the Aegean Sea are reported to be taking a rest until the sea serpent has been destroyed." (*Evening Post*, NZ, 21 October 1922, p 12, also *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 6 November 1922, *Evening Star*, NZ, 10 November 1922, p 8)

A shorter and more restraint version of the story can be found in the German newspaper *Nachrichten für Stadt und Land: Oldenburger Zeitung für Volk und Heimat*, 4 August 1922, p. 6. It reads (my translation)

"A Sea Monster in the Marmara Sea. Reports from Athens say that the ships in the Marmara Sea have been in considerable excitement because of the appearance of a 'sea monster'. The animal was also seen of Euboea, and the Greek government had to dispatch a war ship to hunt for the rare guest. Then it suddenly appeared in the Marmara Sea at the Asiatic coast. The passengers of a mail steamer which the animal passed believe it is a whale of more than common size." Thus, it seems that the giant flying snake was the invention of a sensation-hungry writer of the *New York Times*!

To contrast this sensational news, perhaps a real flying snake was the one reported in 1933:

'A FLYING SNAKE.— EXCEEDINGLY DANGEROUS REPTILE. The latest thing in "aviatics arrived at the London Zoo recently, when Mr St Alban Smith, a Malayan planter, presented the society with a "flying snake."

The reptile is non-poisonous and scarcely two feet long—but it has a novel method of attack which spells death to small birds and lizards. By taking a. deep breath the shake can convert its tubular body into a concave "plane"—like a split bamboo. A bird may be congratulating itself on its safety when suddenly a branch 20 feet above it breaks off – apparently in the wind. But instead of falling at random, the branch launches itself with unerring aim at the bird, and the next moment the victim is struggling in a tangle of coils.

The newcomer is exceedingly savage, and literally becomes "blind with rage" on the slightest provocation. In attempting to damage its keeper, it hit itself three times in succession.' (*Western Star*, NZ, 24 October 1933, p 4)

Certainly less conventional are two flying snakes mentioned by Jorge Luis Borges, in his *El libro des los seres imaginarios* (Barcelona: Editorial Bruguera 1980, p. 93). As the fauna of China he lists– among others –

"The fish *Hua* or flying fish serpent resembles a fish but also has the wings of a bird. Its appearance presages drought. […]

The *Musical Serpent* has the head of a serpent and four wings. It makes a sound like that of a musical stone." (my translations)

In his book *The road to Ubar: Finding the Atlantis of the Sands* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 1999, German edition: D*ie Stadt der Düfte. Auf der Suche nach dem Atlantis der Wüste,* p 174), American author Nicholas Clapp tells of flying snakes in the sands of the Emty Quarter, on the Arabian Peninsula.

# The Ozark Howler:North America`s perplexing proteus

## Shane Lea and Richard Muirhead

The Ozark Howler is a very controversial cryptid because some serious cryptozoologists (eg Dr Karl Shuker) think it is a hoax,which of course doesn`t necessarily mean it *is* a hoax. American cryptozoologist David Weatherly,who has written several books on American cryptozoology told me (Richard) that he believed the Ozark Howler might be a wolf. However the grey wolf is distributed in the northern states of the USA not south-central like Arkansas, unless it is a displaced Mexican grey wolf. There is a brief Wikipedia entry for the Ozark Howler as follows: “In Arkansas folklore, the Howler is a legendary creature said to dwell in the Ozarks. According to tradition, the creature is bear-like in shape with a gray colored, shaggy coat. In December 2015, the Arkansas television station 40/29 News reported that it had received photographs purported to be images of the creature from a viewer. The station contacted the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, who responded that they had heard of no claims of sightings of the creature, and said that the images sent to the station were a hoax.

Call records to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission during the fall of 2014 include a reported sighting of an animal in Benton County, Arkansas. In October 2014, a recorded emergency call received by the AGFC indicates a motorist nearly collided with an unidentified mammal at 9:45 PM. The recorded phone conversation indicates that armed state wildlife officers may have been dispatched to investigate what reports described as a bear-sized, gray, fast-running animal on Pump Station Road in Springdale.[1]” The footnote 1 is as follows:Staff. 2015. 'Ozark Howler' sighting at Devils Den? Game & Fish say photos are a 'hoax'. 40/29 News.

Chad Arment provides a useful eye witness account of some cryptids which might have been of the Ozark Howler type in his book `Varmints`. Describing the experience of Mr Edgin in 1991 from a report in the Charleston, Arkansas Express of January 10th 2006, we get a very clear description of what the Ozark Howler might look like: (the location was northeast of Ozark) " ...Mr Edgin stated the animals were unlike any he had ever seen. He said that one animal was about 5 inches shorter than the other, the larger being about 3 feet tall at the top of its shoulder. Both were about the color of a bob cat, with heads that seemed oversized for the bodies. The head and nose were noticeably more like a canine`s than a feline`s. According to Mr Edgin the most noticeable feature on the head was the animal`s ears. He stated the ear`s were unusually large for the size of the head. The ears were reportedly mule-like, about 6 inches long, with tufts of hair growing from their tips. He noted that the neck was also thick and muscular. He stated the animals had tails that were catlike, but longer than a bobcat`s and shorter than a cougar`s. He particularly noted the tails were rounded on the ends, and not pointed like a dog`s.

He said the animals possessed massive chests and very muscular front legs. Their back legs were noticeably shorter, causing the back to be sloped like that of a hyena. When the animals ran, he stated they "pushed off" using their front legs, landed on all four feet, and continued their travel in that springing fashion…"(1)

Mysterious Creatures A Guide to Cryptozoology Volume 2 by George M.Eberhart has the following entry on the Ozark Howler: " Dubious CAT-like animal of the south-central United States. *Variant names:* Black howler, Mountain howler, Night howler, Ozark black mystery cat.

*Physical description:*Length,4-5ft. Size of a large bobcat or lynx. Thick, black fur. Ear tufts. Glowing eyes. Tail, 12-14 in.

*Behaviour:* Distinctive howl, heard at dusk. Not afraid of humans.

*Distribution:* Ozark mountains of Missouri and Arkansas.

*Present status:* An unnamed University of Memphis student created most of the legend as an Internet hoax in 1998,but others say there have been reports of medium-sized black cats in the Ozarks since at least the 1950s.

*Possible explanation*: A Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) x Domestic cat (*Felis silvestris catus)* hybrid.

SOURCES:

Karl Shuker "For Crying Out Loud It`s the Ozark Howler!" *Fortean Times,*no 112 (July 1998): 17;

Loren Coleman, "Mysterious World" *Fate* 51 (September 1998): 10-11,70;

The Ozark Howler,http://www.geocities.com/r_prevo/history.html(2)

I (Richard Muirhead) asked a question about source materiel on the Ozark Howler on the Fortean Times Appreciation Facebook group on February 23rd 2022 and received the following response from Graham Saunders: "As far as I am aware the first recorded report appears in Noticias de Nutka. Written in 1792. "' I`ll also note that in those locations I`m referring to (deep in isolated communities in Virginia, Florida and the North west Pacific into Canada) there were no such things as weekly newspapers, and very few literate people, with most residents being likely to own a single family bible as their only reading material. So if almost nobody read, and almost nobody traveled, the fact that seemingly *every* community had the same stories under different names (indicating different sources) seems to be a valid data-point." The Noticias de Nutka is an account of Nootka Sound which is a collection of inlets on the west coast of Vancouver Island, so it is a long way from traditional Ozark Howler territory,

but it does show  that this type of cryptid is widespread across North America. There is a web site called Cryptid Casefile which Shane came across which gives information on the Ozark Howler,as follows: “Between the states of Missouri, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma lays a mysterious region known as the Ozark Mountains. For hundreds of years the people who live there have told tales of paranormal entities, strange creatures and monsters that inhabit these mountains. one such beast is said to fill the mountains with a haunting cry and should you encounter it, death will soon follow. This is the story of The Ozark Howler. The Ozark Howler is a creature known by many names. some call it the Hoo-Hoo and to others its known as The Devil Cat, The Whistling Campus, or The Nightshade Bear. Its appearance varies in description, but most seem to agree that is a stocky and hulking beast. This abominable horror is said to sport a black, shaggy fur coat with the closest anatomical equivalent being some kind of big cat, bear or some unknown mutant subspecies of the former.” (3)

Photo of the head of a possible Ozark Howler from Puzzle Box Horror web-site: https://puzzleboxhorror.com/encyclopedia-of-supernatural-horror/ozark-howler/

According to The Conspiracy Legend Blog: “On the more mystical spectrum, The Ozark Howler has been described as both an omen of death and a shape-shifting creature. In the case of it being an omen of death, many inhabitants of the Ozarks have claimed that anyone who hears its “howl” will die shortly after. While this is much like some other cryptids from across the world, it has to be added that the Ozark Howler has never killed anyone. While some reports claim that it has scared or carried humans it has never been known to attack anyone with the intent to kill. Now, as for the idea of it being a shapeshifter, this is also a feature more well known by people in the Ozarks and it claims that the Ozark howler can shift into different animals. To be very honest, this theory has probably arisen due to fake sightings of other animals which have been merged into being the Ozark howler. Due to this people probably added that it can shapeshift thus other animals like hyenas or cougars must’ve been the Ozark howler. There is also little to no inclination of any reports or actual claims pointing to it being a shape-shifting creature.” (4)

Shane provided the image below of the Ozark Howler below from the web site https://i0.wp.com/theconlblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ozark-Howler.jpg?fit=334%2C274&ssl=1

Shane passed on the following information to me: “The legend of the Ozark Howler dates back to the 1790’s, in the Ozark Mountain region of Missouri and Arkansas, in the USA.
Amerindians knew it as a gigantic black panther.
Legendary frontiersman Daniel Boone claims to have shot and even killed a large, shaggy, feline, with horns, near the Platte River in NW Missouri. Reports of the Ozark Howler by Ozark region residents, are very consistent, describing a bulky, shaggy, black, feline beast with horns or not, that is nocturnal and lets out a piercing-howl-like-scream, similar to an elk’s bugle combined with a howl.

An image of the supposed Ozark Howler from the Springfield News Leader December 17th 2015

Not only was Daniel Boone involved with the Ozark Howler, but two presidents, including none other than Teddy Roosevelt, were members of one of the world’s first secret societies. This secret society was dedicated to protecting the Ozark Howler and it’s habitat. Roosevelt, famous for conservation, in the form of creating national parks, established the Ozark National Forest.
An entire book on the Ozark Howler, including poetry devoted to the Howler, was written in 1932, by Saul Ashton.
One of the better accounts, was from F. Smit, in the mountains of SE Oklahoma. Smit was part of a local brigade of citizens who volunteered to help a local farmer that was suffering from predation on his livestock. Smit was on patrol, near where one of the latest attacks on

livestock had occurred, when he was jumped by a cougar-like animal, with yellow eyes and black fur, that proceeded to maul him and was in the process of crushing his skull, when another citizen came to his rescue and shot the animal in the leg. The wounded beast then proceeded to bound off into the darkness.

Ozark Howler reports continue to this day, sometimes startling the un/fortunate people who encounter this elusive animal.

Many reports date from the 21st century. One such report, dating from 27 July, 2018, on the Full Moon Trail, in Marguerite Bray Conservation Area, described an animal that looked like a bear, but moved like a cat and was 6-feet tall at the shoulder!

Collating the Ozark Howler data leaves the distinct impression that something very physical and very real is behind this 200-year-old saga.

Canids are the only animals that can truly howl. Unidentified vocalizations have been heard at night in the Ozarks, and even recorded. No doubt, a few reclusive Red Wolves have played their part in the ongoing natural history that continues to this day. Red Wolves have officially been extirpated from the Ozarks, but there is a very high probability that a small, remnant population survives there, yet.

Having said that, there is still a core of strange reports of a very large, black, shaggy animal with/or without horns, that screams in the night. This cryptid is usually described as feline-like, but, sometimes like an ursid. What on Earth could look like a bear, or a cat and possibly howl like a canine? A creodont could. Creodonts were native to North America until they were out-competed by modern Gray Wolves and other more modern felines. Creodonts combined ursid, canine and feline characteristics. It's ears could be interpreted as horns, especially at night, or in poor-lighting-conditions. Could a last remnant population of Creodonts like the Creodont Hemipsalodon, have been driven into the Midwest mountain region of the Ozark Mountains? The Ozarks are replete with underground cave systems and underground grottos where a cryptid of this type could remain hidden and elusive, making it's last stand. It seems to suspend disbelief. The fact remains however, that a significant portion of North American wildlife are survivors from the Pleistocene Era or beyond. White-Tailed Deer, Pronghorn Antelope, Gray Wolves, Moose, Elk, Mountain Lions,

Brown Bears, Caribou, Musk-Oxen, Alligator Snapping Turtles, Alligator Gar, Bowfin, White Sturgeon, Alligator Gar and American Crocodiles are ALL remnants of past ecosystems, that have managed to fight off the predation and habitat-loss created by the white ape, Man. As a matter of fact, there are so many prehistoric survivors in North America, that I could fill up an entire book on nothing but that. It would blow your mind! I am not kidding. And, you can talk about birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians or mammals, it really doesn't matter! All you cynics, critics and Philistines out there, take note, There Are Lost Worlds Everywhere! But, we haven't found the fossils of such and such! Bollocks! Leave the tunnel-vision behind, open up your mind and see the light! Look at the scanty evidence for human evolution, that Anthropologists squabble over. It's obvious the fossil record will grow, as will our zoological inventory of the Earth, due to the targeted-search-methodology of Cryptozoology. The Great Days Of Zoology Are NOT Done-not even close!

Above: Creodont Hemipsalodon

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# Alpine Newts in Macclesfield

## Richard Muirhead

About ten to fifteen years ago I was told by someone about a population of Alpine newts in the Macclesfield suburb of Hurdsfield. Apparently they had escaped from a garden pond there and spread out over the surrounding area. On December 9th 2021 I posted a question on the Original Macc Chat Facebook group asking for information as to the current status of this population of Alpine newts and I received several replies including the recent photo of one of the newts which is on the cover of this issue of Flying Snake..Banks Vic told me that he "found one under a rock in my garden in the summer" ; that is to say the summer of 2021. Andy Brookes-Wilde said: "Martin Ashcroft is the man , they started off in a pond in the garden of the gate house at the bottom of Brocklehurst ave ."Mr Brookes-Wilde later added: "...they are still around, new breeding ground now off Brook Street." The interesting thing about this piece of information is that Brook Street is about a mile from Hurdsfield and the only realistic place where the newts could have come from is Knight`s Pool or the Macclesfield Canal not far away.

According to The Sentinel The Newsletter for Biological Recorders in Cheshire,Halton, Warrington and Wirral Issue 8 June 2010: " Jim Grundy, a herpetologist from Congleton and author of '*Newts in Your Garden*', was contacted by a gentleman regarding some unusual species of newts that he'd seen in his garden in the centre of Macclesfield. Jim was amazed when he visited and encountered not only the Alpine Newt *Ichthyosaura alpestris* but also the magnificent Marbled Newt *Triturus marmoratus* too…It all made sense when the owner explained that a herpetologist had resided at the property over six years ago and kept alien species captive in a series of pools. The surprise is that the Alpine Newts appear to be thriving…"

## Re: Alpine Newt Entry Required in Dictionary

Could you please add an entry for the Alpine Newt (Lissotriton alpestris (Laurenti, 1768). They have been breeding in a Macclesfield pond for over 6 years and have also been caught at another pond in the Manchester Airport area.

The above is an entry on the National Biodiversity Network`s web site on August 8th 2010.

Distribution of *Triturus_alpestris*, based on Nöllert/Nöllert: *"Die Amphibien Europas*" Wikipedia Creative Commons

I found the following in Lever`s The Naturalised Animals of Britain and Ireland:
" SALIMANDRIDAE(NEWTS & EURASIAN SALAMANDERS)
ALPINE NEWT Triturus alpestris

Natural Distribution W,C and E Europe,from W Russia to N and E France,and from S Denmark to N Italy and C Greece. A disjunct population occurs in Asturias and Cantabria in N Spain

Naturalized Distribution in England

England

The oldest known naturalized population of Alpine Newts in England,numbering several hundred individuals,was established in 1903,when T.B.Rothwell released some in a series of ponds at the Beam Brook Aquatic Nursery at Newdigate in Surrey. (For information on Alpine and Italian Crested Newts at nearby Nutfield see under the latter species page 234.)

Other,more recent,populations have since occurred in various localities including including south-east London (Kent),Sussex,Birmingham,Warwickshire,Shropshire,Sunderland and Co. Durham. The Shropshire population is derived from four adult males and three adult females released in ponds in a village near Market Drayton in April 1970. This garden is situated in open countryside on the edge of the village ,where native amphibians such as the Smooth Newt and Great Crested or Warty Newt frequented the ponds. The introduced Alpine Newts were supplied by a retailer named de Rover of Ermelo in the Netherlands ,though whether they were of Dutch origin is unrecorded.

In 1976,adults and larvae from this Shropshire site were transferred to another garden pond 3.2km to the south-west,to which native amphibians (and predators) also had access. Bell (1978) reported that the
- ine Newts from the Market Drayton pond had spread barely 20m during the first seven years.

Between April and September 1993 ,23 and 17 years respectively after the animals release at the 2 sites, a total of 52 ponds nearby was surveyed,when the Alpine Newts was revealed in only 10 (19 per cent). At both release sites the Alpine Newts remained common,from the 1970 release site the newts had dispersed to ponds up to 70 m and from the 1976 release site to a pond 50 m distant. The species had thus spread very little from its original ponds,whereas in its natural range it is capable of quite wide dispersal. This suggests the existence in Shropshire of ecological barriers,such as perhaps buildings,and/or the relatively small founder stock compared to the existing stock of native species,which might out-compete the invasive. However,at a site in Kent much larger-scale movements of Alpine Newts have taken place. In 1994, a single adult female was caught in a pond containing Smooth and Great Crested Newts she had almost certainly come from a garden pond containing a long standing colony 1 km to the south. Three years later a male joined this female, presumably from the same source. The possibility of translocation by humans, however, cannot be ruled out, since the Alpine Newt is a highly aquatic species. In about 1980 and again in 1984,Alpine Newts from Brighton in Sussex were introduced to two pounds in Sunderland,Tyne & Wear (one in the grounds of the Sunderland Polytechnic at Droxford Park). These populations died out when the ponds were infilled in 1988 and 1987 respectively."

# A strange visitor to Loch Ness in 1933 and Monster birds in Britain in 1934

## ANOTHER "MONSTER" SEEN

### Caretaker's Story of Huge Bird

MARLOW (BUCKS.) residents are excited about the presence of a monster bird which has been seen near the Thames by Mr W. M. Weller, caretaker to the offices and gardens for Marlow Council.

Mr Weller said he saw the bird early yesterday morning when making his rounds. "It was standing by the river," he said, "and when it noticed me it flew away with a loud whirr of wings. It was of tremendous size, with a wing spread at about four feet. It had a short neck, and as black in colour.

"I have lived by the river for years, and I know it was neither a swan nor a heron. It appeared to be more like an eagle."

A few months ago some lambs were killed at Little Marlow, three miles away, and a bird like an eagle was seen in the neighbourhood.

The Scotsman February 23rd 1934 © British Newspaper Archive

# A GIANT BIRD

A giant bird which attacked two rabbit trappers in the Island of Coll, Argyllshire, and which had to be driven off with sticks after it had swooped several times, was later captured and identified as an Iceland falcon—a rare visitor to West Scotland. It had a wing span of 4½ft.

Hull Daily Mail March 31st 1934 © British Newspaper Archive

## LOCH NESS ANGLER'S STRANGE CATCH

LITTLE AUK FASCINATED BY BAIT.

A Loch Ness salmon fisher had a strange catch yesterday.

While trolling at Fort-Augustus, Daniel Cameron, a local boatman, observed a strange bird diving repeatedly at his lures, known to anglers as golden sprats, that is, natural sprats such as are caught in the Tay and dyed a bright gold.

To the angler's surprise and horror the bird rose with a sprat in its bill firmly hooked thereto. Being of small dimensions it resisted feebly, but ere the hooks were freed it collapsed and died.

It was identified as a little auk. This bird has never visited Loch Ness, and the stranger's presence was doubtless due to the recent blizzard.

The little auk is not unlike the penguin, although much smaller, its length being 8 inches. Normally it visits our northern coasts in winter.

Salmon anglers have been known to hook a seagull or a cormorant whose appetites happened to be larger than their powers of reasoning.

Being powerful birds the battle in such cases is a grim affair, and often a considerable time has to elapse before the outraged victim is made to disgorge his unpalatable meal and set free to pursue his legal quarry.

The Hon. Simon Rodney and Mr. F. J. S.

Dundee Courier March 3rd 1933

© British Newspaper Archive

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer May 18th 1934 © British Newspaper Archive

# THE GIANT BIRD

## Again Seen by Bridlington Visitor

Sir,—When leaving Bridlington by the road which passes the Grammar School at 9.30 p.m. on Saturday last my wife and I were both amazed to see what appeared to be an immense bird hovering over one of the buildings. Eventually it swooped to earth in a plantation behind the school.

It was too dark to distinguish its colouring, but from its proportions I imagine it might well have been the bird described by Mr. Dowson.—Yours, etc.,

D. MOLYNEUX.

The Rectory, Oglethorpe, Driffield, May 17.

* * A report of a strange bird having been seen at Bridlington appeared in our news columns on Wednesday. Mr. Charles Dowson, a ticket-collector, who saw the creature, said to our Bridlington correspondent: "I first saw it flying high, then it came to within 100 yards of me over the street. Two women in the street also saw it. It was dusk and the light was not good, but I saw distinctly that it had red wings and a wingspread of over six feet. It was as long as a man. We watched it for several minutes, as it came nearer and then flew off towards a plantation. Others who saw it, like myself, think it was a huge eagle."

## *Baffling Bird*

I have had a wretched time trying to discover what species of giant bird your correspondents saw in the gloaming at Bridlington. The South Kensington Museum were having their half-holiday, but one of the officials kindly scanned the letters addressed to you. He excluded the ostrich, the emu, and the phœnix straightaway, as the first two cannot fly and the third only burns. That left, of the birds which can be described as "long as a man," the stork, from the marabou downwards, and the heron. Storks are very rare in England, and they can hardly be said to have red wings. Herons still less so.

The official was inclined, therefore, to reject the evidence about the bird's stature and concentrate upon its wing span and colouration. Here, he thinks that a sea-eagle is the best guess. The sea-eagle is also rare. Indeed, the sale of a stuffed specimen, shot in Scotland, created quite a museum sensation forty years ago, he remembered. But occasionally they are blown over the North Sea, and some of them have wing-feathers whose colour might conceivably be called red. He would like more details.

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer May 19th 1934 © British Newspaper Archive

# THE GIANT BIRD

## Is It a Migrant Great Bustard?

Sir,—It is more than probable, I think, that "the strange bird—long as a man with red wings" seen by Mr. Dowson, ticket collector, L.N.E.R., Bridlington Station, is a bustard. The "Otis tarda," the great bustard, was a native of Britain till 1838, and it was at Bempton in that year where the bird last found a home. The bustard was the largest British land bird, the wing span being eight feet or more. It still exists in many parts of Europe, in North Africa and in Asia, and occurs in Britain as an occasional migrant.

There is extant a letter, I understand, supposed to have been written by the late Sir William Strickland, of Boynton, inviting some friends to a dinner party at which they would dine off a great bustard, probably the last of his race. Obviously this was not to be the last, even in this neighbourhood, if what Mr. Dowson has seen is what I think—a migrant bustard.—Yours, etc.,

J. MAWSON, late Vicar of Bempton.
Ashford, St. James' Road, Bridlington.

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer May 19th 1934 © British Newspaper Archive

# PERUSING THE PEGASI – PLINY'S HORSE-HEADED MYSTERY BIRDS

## May 12th 2014

## Dr Karl Shuker

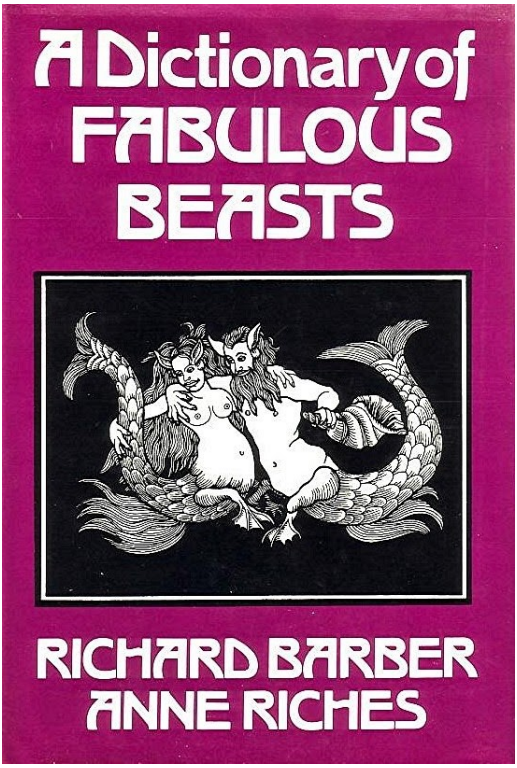
**Pegasi illustration (© Tony Millionaire / inclusion here strictly on Fair Use/non-commercial basis only)**

One of the best-known creatures of classical mythology is Pegasus – the flying horse who sprang into existence (along with his human brother, Chrysaor) from spurts of blood gushing forth from the neck of the snake-haired gorgon Medusa when Greek hero Perseus beheaded her with his sword.

Much less famous than Pegasus, conversely, but often confused with him on account of their similar name are the subjects of this present ShukerNature blog – the pegasi or horse-headed birds, fabulous entities variously claimed to occur in Scythia or in Ethiopia.

**A phalanx of flying horses (© Ezra Tucker / inclusion here strictly on Fair Use/non-commercial basis only)**As I've noted on previous occasions, some of my most productive and interesting investigations are cases that have been initiated by the sparsest of information, sometimes no more than a line or two, or a simple footnote, tucked away and readily overlooked in text otherwise devoted to much more familiar, extensively-documented subjects. I've presented some of these hitherto-obscure cases here on ShukerNature (as well as in articles and comprehensive, often chapter-length coverage in books) - and they include such fascinating subjects as archangel feathers...Brevet's all-black Malayan tapirs...the Iberian zebro or encebro...Sloan's blue rhinoceros...and Heuvelmans's green leopard...the exploding worm of Kalmykia...and the Isle of Wight's gooseberry wife...flying cats...flying mice... flying jackals... and flying turtles... the world's only intergeneric elephant hybrid...Jamaican monkeys ... and Janus cats... the sukotyro... the purple macaw... mirrii dogs... the night jaguar

New Guinea penguins... scarlet bats...and scarlet vipers... the antlered snail of the Sarmatian Sea...stone worms...and Steller's sea-bear... white eagles...shrieking centipedes...the kuil kaax...were-worms..and much more besides.




***A Dictionary of Fabulous Beasts* by Richard Barber and Anne Riches**

And so it was that, many years ago when still a teenager, I first learnt of the pegasi (aka pegasy and pegasies) from the briefest of sources – the following single line that appeared in *A Dictionary of Fabulous*

*Beasts* (1971), written by Richard Barber and Anne Riches:

> **Pegasi** Horse-headed birds found in Scythia; Pliny, who reports their appearance, regards them as fabulous. (118)

In classical times, Scythia was the name given to a region encompassing much of present-day Eastern Europe and Central Asia. As for the bracketed 118, this referred to a numbered reference in this book's bibliography, the reference in question being Dr John Bostock's translation from 1855 of the encyclopaedic *Naturalis Historiae* (aka *Historia Naturalis*) - the multi-volume magnum opus of Roman naturalist-historian Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD).

C. PLINII SECUNDI
NATURALIS HISTORIÆ,
TOMUS PRIMUS.
Cum Commentariis & adnotationibus HERMOLAI BARBARI, PINTIANI, RHENANI, GELENII, DALECHAMPII, SCALIGERI, SALMASII, Is. VOSSII, & Variorum.
*Accedunt præterea variæ Lectiones ex MSS. compluribus ad oram Paginarum accurate indicatæ.*
Item JOH. FR. GRONOVII Notarum Liber Singularis ad Illustrem Virum *Johannem Capelanum.*
MOVEO
LUGD. BATAV. ROTERODAMI } Apud HACKIOS, A°. 1669.

**Title page from the 1669 edition of Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historiae***

I was able to obtain a copy of Bostock's translation via Britain's indispensable inter-library loans service, and I discovered that the lone line documenting the pegasi in the fabulous beasts dictionary by Barber and Riches was simply a paraphrasing of Pliny's original statement - which opened Chapter 70 of his encyclopaedia (a chapter dealing with fabulous birds), and read as follows:

> "I look upon the birds as fabulous which are called "pegasi," and are said to have a horse's head; as also the griffons, with long ears and a hooked beak. The former are said to be natives of Scythia,[1] the latter of Aethiopia."

The superscript [1] referred to a footnote by Bostock that stated:

> "Scythia and Ethiopia ought to be transposed here, as the griffons were said to be monsters that guarded the gold in the mountains of Scythia, the Uralian chain, probably."Otherwise, nothing new there. (NB - In classical times, Ethiopia referred to much of East Africa, not just the present-day country bearing this name.)

**An engraving from 1663 of a griffin with ears**

Moreover, despite perusing countless books and published articles on mythological animals in subsequent years, I never encountered any additional mention of pegasi. So the decades slipped by while visions of horse-headed birds periodically flapped on heavy wings across the horizon of my mind but never alighted long enough in my consciousness to induce me to investigate them any further – until quite recently, that is, when, after recalling these semi-equine enigmas yet again, I decided that it was time to pursue the pegasi online. So I did - and here is what I found out about them.

Pliny the Elder was not the only classical scholar to document the pegasi. Preceding his *Naturalis Historiae* was a short treatise written in c. 43 AD by Rome's earliest geographer, Pomponius Mela, entitled *De Situ Orbis Libri III* – which Pliny used as a major authority for the geographical sections in his own publication. And both Mela's treatise and Pliny's encyclopaedia were used as sources of material by the 3rd-Century compiler and grammarian Gaius Julius Solinus in his own master-work, *De Mirabilibus Mundi* (translated as *The Wonders of the World*). Interestingly, Pomponius Mela and Solinus merely stated that the pegasi sported horses' ears – it was Pliny who claimed that they were horse-headed. Also, the two former authors reported that these birds lived in or near a lake So far, however, whether horse-headed or horse-eared, the pegasi have been deemed to be entirely mythical, with no more basis in reality than their winged steed namesake, Pegasus. But is it possible that they actually constituted a distorted or embellished account of a genuine, bona fide species of bird? In his book *Birds in the Ancient World from A to Z* (2012), W. Geoffrey Arnott includes a short account of the pegasi, and, accepting Bostock's suggestion in his translation of Pliny's encyclopaedia that these birds were native to Ethiopia, not Scythia, he notes that there are no less than three relatively common species of East African bird with erect, pointed crests resembling a horse's ears that perch in lakeside trees. Namely, the long-crested eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*,

-the spotted eagle owl *Bubo africanus*, and the white-bellied go-away bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster*. So could one of these be the identity of the pegasi?

**The white-bellied go-away bird (© Steve Garvie/Wikipedia)**

Personally, I consider it improbable that either of the first two species would make a plausible candidate, simply because eagles and owls would already be very familiar birds to classical European scholars, and therefore it seems doubtful that even via several retellings between original observation and subsequent documentation a Chinese whispers process could convert either of these into a horse-eared (or –headed) avian anomaly. Conversely, the third species named might be a more plausible candidate, because go-away birds would be far less familiar to European scholars as they are confined entirely to tropical Africa, and are totally unlike any European bird in appearance. Consequently, a go-away bird's appearance could become distorted much more readily by the Chinese whispers process ...

**A female Abyssinian ground hornbill (© Quartl/Wikipedia)**

In addition, one Twitter correspondent suggested that a hornbill might make a promising candidate for the pegasi, and there is no doubt that certain species of hornbill do possess a vaguely horse-headed appearance, due to their huge, burly beaks, which at a distance could resemble a horse's muzzle. Moreover, one species that is especially reminiscent of the pegasi just so happens to be a native of Ethiopia - namely, the Abyssinian ground hornbill *Bucorvus abyssinicus*. One of the two largest species of hornbill anywhere on the world, it has been specifically recorded from the immediate vicinity of Ethiopia's Lake Langano, thereby fulfilling another pegasi requirement as a plausible candidate - living by a lake.

Ultimately, however, it seems unlikely that we shall ever know for certain whether the pegasi do have a basis in ornithological fact as well as a presence in classical fable.

**Man riding a hippalectryon - damaged depiction on the interior of an Attica black-figure lip cup, 540–530 BC (public domain)**

Interestingly, the pegasi are not the only horse-birds on record. There is also the hippalectryon to consider. No less obscure than the pegasi, this yellow-plumed composite beast from ancient Greek folklore is variously said to have combined the wings, legs, and tail of a cockerel (most frequently), an eagle, or a giant vulture with the head and forequarters of a horse, and could apparently be tamed and ridden by anyone brave enough to attempt this daunting feat. It is represented, sometimes bearing a bold rider, in several pieces of ancient art, including vases, statues, and coins, most commonly dating from the 6th Century BC; but the oldest known example - an askos (liquid-pouring pottery vessel) from Knossos - dates from the 9th Century BC.

Finally: horse-bird composites are assuredly the stuff of dreams, especially any dreams that can be designed by those skilled in the illusive arts of Photoshop - so here is a truly delightful example to leave you with:

**(original source/copyright owner unknown to me)**

1. Unknown: I'm pleased to see the hippalectryon getting a little attention. Long has he languished in the shadow of the more famous pegasus. No doubt, he once had he own legend.

2. Unknown: What about the shoe-billed stork? http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=shoebill+stork&qpvt=shoebill+stork&FORM=IGRE

The face is rather horse-ish to me and was the first thing I thought of. They are from Africa as well.

3. Dr Karl Shuker

The shoebill's beak is so enormous and ostentatious, I feel sure that it would have been specifically alluded to by pegasi chroniclers if this species were the latter's identity. Also, I'm afraid that I can't see any resemblance to a horse's head with the shoebill's head.

4. Unknown

Anyone not familiar with a shoe-billed stork would not know what it was. Early chroniclers would not likely know what they were looking at. Later ones might, but might not realize earlier writers wrote about them as pegasii.

Much like early Greeks might not recognize elephant fossils as elephants but later Greeks would recognize them.

5. Dr Karl Shuker

I appreciate that early chroniclers probably wouldn't know what a shoebill was, but what I am saying is that I don't think anyone seeing a shoebill would describe it as being horse-headed, and I feel that anyone seeing it would specifically refer to it having a huge beak.

# The Goblin of the Loaf

## Loes Modderman

*Bron: Nandor Fodor, 'Between Two Worlds'*

This is one of the oddest stories I know of. This world gets 'curiouser and curiouser', to quote Alice.

But I tell this on good authority.

From the Bible we know of the wondrous bread-multiplication, and from poltergeists and other geists, notably in Spiritualism, we know the apports, the dis- and appearances. StarTreks replicator isn't that far fetched: there are powers that can disassemble objects into molecules and fit them together again. They can build palaces in one night and make them disappear when they are no longer needed. Paramahamsa Yogananda wrote one such a story from personal experience in his famous Autobiography, and Sufi master Idries Shah also mentions such stories. The echo of such stories can be found in fairytales, but there is no doubt that such fairytales have a basis in reality. Maybe these are natural laws in operation, but we don't know them, and as long as we don't, we call it magic.

Nandor Fodor (1895-1964) was a Hungarian-American psychoanalyst and parapsychologist who wrote several books, among which are the extensive Encyclopaedia of Psychic Science (1966) and 'Between Two Worlds'(1964).a book with many short stories from parapsychological literature. Both books are digitalised and on the internet.

From the last book this story is taken (p 148).

It appeared for the first time in FATE, Dec 1961.

It centers around the Websters, a family of 9 living in Raikes Farm, Beverley, England, at the beginning of the 20th Century.They made ends meet with difficulty, for feeding so many mouths isn't easy.

Bread was of the essence, more than most other food.

Their farmhouse was said to be haunted. Strange noises and mysterious choir singing were heard in the night, writes Fodor, but what most disturbed the family was that from March 1903 the fresh baked bread seemed to crumble away each night. First the family thought it were mice or rats doing this, and precautions were taken to prevent the loaves from disappearing. They put the bread in a closed pan, put up rat traps, sprinkled flour on the floor , closed every door, but still the loaves disappeared or dwindled in size.

After three months of suffering in silence the family asked for police assistence. Constable Berridge was flabbergasted. He brought loaves with him, put them under lock and key, and next day they looked all right but were completely hollowed out, and still getting smaller.

Ten leading chemists visited the farm and found no trace of any organism that could be the culprit.

Mrs Webster than started baking cakes enstead of loaves, but when the bread was gone the cake also disappeared. Strangely enough, when the bread was removed from the house, it stayed intact. The 'goblin' or whatever insatiable elemental devoured the bread seemed to be attached to the house.

Fodor then recalls a case from 1406, related by Ibn Khaldoun in his 'Universal History' , about magicians in India, who could point to someone and this man would drop dead. It was subsequently found that his heart was missing.

The same, though less dangerous, would happen to fruits, from which by pointing all the seeds would vanish.

Then Fodor relates a very strange story told by Père Labat, of a black sorceress who, on route to the French Islands in 1696, could waste the hearts and livers of her negro companions.

The Surgeon Major didn't give in to her powers, and he bound her and struck her. The woman threatened to eat his heart out. Two days later the man died in agony. They opened him up. His heart and liver, tells Père Labat, were found to be as dry as parchment.

The Captain was, understandably, a bit frightened by now, and he promised to send her back to her country.

If only she could behave.

But the woman was not done yet.

To prove her power, she ordered a bunch of water melons, which she could all eat before 24 hours were gone.

The melons were locked up, and the key put in the captains pocket.

The next morning the watermelons looked as healthy as ever, and the captain thought he had triumphed over witch craft. But when the chest was opened the melons were completly empty, nothing but the skin remained, as dry as parchment.

The ship had to return to the harbour to take in water and supplies.

As for the loaf eater of Raikes Farm, there has never been an explanation for the strange mystery.

# A 1908 Snake Story in Tennessee

## by Kate Shaw of Strange Animals Podcast (strangeanimalspodcast.blubrry.net)

On July 25, 1908, the St. Louis (Missouri) *Globe-Democrat* ran an article about a giant snake in Loudon, Tennessee. Loudon is a town half an hour's drive away from Knoxville in East Tennessee, although it took longer to get there from Knoxville in 1908. According to the article, the snake was "at least twenty-five feet in length, eight inches in diameter and twenty-four inches in circumference."

The longest snake ever reliably measured is a reticulated python named Medusa, who was measured as 25 feet 2 inches long in 2011, or 7.67 meters. Medusa holds the world record for the longest snake in captivity. Reticulated pythons are constrictors, which are non-venomous snakes who kill their prey by squeezing them until blood flow is shut off to the organs, causing cardiac arrest and death. As a result, they're incredibly strong snakes. The reticulated python is native to southern Asia and not likely to be found running loose in East Tennessee even today, and certainly not in 1908.

The famous *Boa constrictor* and other snakes in the genus Boa are all native to Central and South America, while the closely related anaconda is from tropical South America. These snakes are also constrictors.

The anaconda is rumored to grow over 30 feet long, or 9 meters, although the longest specimen ever reliably measured was 17 feet long, or 5.2 meters. Since snake skin is stretchy, though, preserved skins of huge size are often provided as proof of snakes much longer than the known maximum. While the anaconda isn't as long as the reticulated python, it's much bulkier, so a 25-foot anaconda would be much heavier and larger around than a 25-foot reticulated python.

The 1908 article claims that the snake "has been seen off and on for the last twenty-eight years, but not until this summer has it caused any serious alarm." I don't know about you, but even as someone who thinks snakes are neat, if I saw a 25-foot snake I would be a little bit alarmed even if it wasn't doing anything. The article then describes how the snake had knocked down a fence while climbing over it and that it had taken a lamb. One man even managed to shoot the snake, although only with "small shot," and the article claims that the snake, "in a frenzy from the pain, tore up saplings in getting away."

The article finishes by reporting that women and children were barricaded in their homes while men organized a posse to hunt down the giant snake, which was rumored to live in a cave overlooking the river.

The same article ran in various newspapers around the country for months, but there was no follow-up to let readers know if the snake had been found. But the story didn't appear in any Tennessee newspapers.

The only 1908 article about a giant snake in Tennessee that appears in a Tennessee newspaper is from August 21. The Chattanooga, Tennessee *Daily Times* reported that a blacksnake "fully six feet long and two inches in diameter" had been spotted eating young pigeons above the Birmingham railway station. A police officer shot and killed it, but its body couldn't be recovered from the steep hillside above the tunnel."Blacksnake" is a term used for two snakes that are common throughout the southern United States: the eastern black kingsnake and the North American racer. Both are black in color and can grow more than 6 feet long, or 1.8 meters. Both are non-venomous and eat small animals like mice, frogs, and lizards, while the kingsnake also sometimes eats other snakes.

The longest snake found in Tennessee, which also lives throughout much of eastern North America, is the gray ratsnake, which is frequently 6 feet long and sometimes longer. One unverified report of a captive snake 8 feet 10 inches long, or almost 2.5 meters, comes from Tennessee. It's a mixture of dark and light gray with a lighter

belly. It's non-venomous and is actually a constrictor, although it's not dangerous to humans. If it feels threatened, it will sometimes pretend to strike and rattle the tip of its tail against dead leaves or whatever else might be underneath it, which produces a buzzing sound that mimics a rattlesnake's rattle.

The eastern racer will also vibrate its tail against leaves to imitate a rattlesnake's rattle, but the eastern racer is such a fast-moving snake that it doesn't usually need to convince potential predators it's dangerous. It just runs away. Despite its name of *Coluber constrictor*, it's not actually a constrictor, although it will pin an animal to the ground with its body until it can swallow it whole. It and the gray ratsnake can both climb trees and will eat bird eggs and young birds when they find them.

There is another article about a giant snake in a Tennessee newspaper from 1908. The Chattanooga *Star* reported on August 20 that a 12-foot, or 3.6 meter, rattlesnake was attacked by a boar when it tried to enter a hog pen. The farmer managed to shoot the snake, which had 29 rattles. The snake was referred to as "Big Jim" in the area. But that story was supposed to have happened in Sullivan, Indiana, not in Tennessee.But Indiana newspapers don't run this account. A July 22, 1908 article in the Indianapolis *News* reports that a rattlesnake with 26 rattles was killed in Nashville, Indiana, but that snake was not quite six feet long, or 1.8 meters.

The "Big Jim" account does appear in one Indiana newspaper, the Hamilton County *Times* from August 21, 1908. But that article is headlined "Some Hoosier 'Nature Fakes'" and says Big Jim was first spotted in the neighboring state of Illinois but had been discovered attacking a farmer's chickens in Sullivan County, Indiana. This must be the same as Sullivan, Indiana reported in the Tennessee paper. But Big Jim was only ten feet long in the Indiana story, or 3 meters, and wasn't killed. The article says the local farmers were organizing to hunt it down, but then goes on to talk about some other stories of huge snakes and a giant fish. It seems clear that the Indiana article is meant to be amusing, not factual.

The largest rattlesnake species is the eastern diamondback rattler, and the largest one ever reliably measured was 7.8 feet long, or 2.4 meters. That's big, but it's not Big Jim big. The eastern diamondback also doesn't live anywhere near Indiana or Illinois. It's native to the

southeastern United States, especially along the coast.

Newspaper reporters weren't always scrupulous in the olden days, sometimes making up stories to fill space and entertain the reader. Stories of huge snakes are so common in old newspaper reports that the term "snake story" was once used interchangeably with "fish story" to indicate an animal of improbable size that was supposedly spotted or killed, but without any proof.

The largest snake ever known, Titanoboa, probably grew 42 feet long at most, or 13 meters, but it lived in South America and went extinct around 58 million years ago. Newspaper reports about snakes that long or longer have to be suspect, although there are undoubtedly individual snakes much longer than their accepted maximum length.

In 1935, the Statesville (North Carolina) *Record and Landmark* ran an article titled "Giant Snake Story Proves To Be Hoax." In this case, though, the story was about a snake skin 16 feet long, or nearly 5 meters, which was supposed to be from a rattlesnake killed in a local swamp. The article revealed that the two men who claimed to have shot the rattlesnake had later confessed the skin was from a python, and had been sent to one of the men by a relative in South America. At least that one was from a real snake.

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The Snake Measured 25 Feet in Length.

# Notes & Queries

## A Sugar glider in London

### I Paper January 13th 2022

**Sugar glider possum flies into London flat**

A sugar glider, a small marsupial native to Australia,was rescued after a man found it scurrying around his bedroom in London. The tiny gliding possum ,which is also indigenous to New Guinea and Indonesia,was found by John Zou in Holborn on Monday...He suspected the exotic animal entered his flat through an open window." I guess he`s someone`s pet and flew into my flat from theirs," Mr Zou added."

## A Crocodile under a Welsh school

### https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-60009983

**January 16th 2022**

**Crocodile found under Rhondda school floor on display**

"A 120-year-old skeleton of a crocodile discovered under a school classroom has gone on display.

The bizarre find was made when builders lifted the floorboards of a Rhondda Cynon Taf school during renovation work.Until then the story of a creature buried beneath Ysgol Bodringallt in Ystrad was long thought to be a myth.Now the "legendary" saltwater crocodile has pride of place in the school after more than two years of restoration."I'd heard a story that parents and school staff had buried a crocodile under the school some time between the two world wars," head teacher Dr Neil Pike said at the time. "But I thought it was a myth and didn't take any notice - until laid on the floor of the hall was the crocodile!"

The interesting thing about this story is that there have long been rumours of crocodiles in Welsh lakes. In an edition of the On The Track You Tube broadcast in early 2022 Jon Downes of the Centre for Fortean Zoology speculated that the crocodile may have been brought back from the then German territory of Bougainville or German New Guinea by a Welsh soldier at the end of World War One.

# Message in a bottle from Scotland to Norway

## I paper January 27th 2022

“A message in a bottle dropped off a fishing boat off the coast of Scotland by an eight year old girl was found 24 years later in Norway.Joanna Buchan,who is now 34,wrote the letter as part of a school project in 1996 and threw it into the sea near Peterhead in Aberdeenshire,before forgetting all about it.But her bottle was found 800 miles away in Gåsvær,an island off the coast of Norway,by Elena Andreassen Haga who tracked its author down on social media…”

# Goats behaving badly in Llandudno

## I Paper February 9th 2022

"Supermarket shoppers were held up by an invasion in the car park as a herd of goats brawled and caused chaos. Kashmiri goats congregated at Asda in Llandudno ,Conwy,on Monday.Two bucks locked horns at the traffic lights,which halted cars trying to enter and leave the car park...It is not the first time that the wild goats have headed into town for some excitement. They were seen on the streets during lockdowns and seem to have acquired a taste for retail therapy,having been spotted in the car park of Primark."

# Message in a bottle on a golf course

## https://www.bunkered.co.uk/golf-news/greenkeepers-unearth-95-year-old-message-in-a-bottle?fbclid=IwAR0-A3vs1rtBIBgg7RSYzrEQOQL8ObUdvV4Ki-N8w62zgMeqHop2YYUeULY

## February 3rd 2022

Staff working on a Scots golf club have uncovered a message in a bottle buried by their predecessors almost a century ago.

Greenkeepers at the Golf House Club in Elie unearthed a bottle while working on improvements to the fairway bunkers on the ninth hole.

Upon closer inspection, they found it contained a well-preserved message. Written on the back of a packet of Craven cigarettes, the note is dated November 18 1926 – making it more than 95 years old.

It reads: "We are here today but where we will be when this is found we do not know. Good luck."

# More Ostrich egg strangeness

Following on from Loes Modderman`s article on ostrich eggs and churches, I found the following information in an excellent book I own titled An Egg At Easter by Venetia Newall (Routledge & Kegan Paul,1971.)

On page 33: " A legend from Iceland about the three Magi tells how on Melchior`s farmyard there was an ostrich which laid two eggs. On Christmas night both were hatched and from one a lamb came forth;from the other ,a lion-the traditional Christian image of peace,drawn from irreconcilable opposites, in the Book of Isaiah."

On page 34: "The story of Seetetelane from Basutoland tells how a poor man, who had no wife,found an egg in a nearby field. He took it home and saved it for a few days. To his surprise,each evening on returning home,beer and bread were ready prepared for him. One day a girl appeared out of the egg,and told him never to speak of this, not even to himself. She made him into a great chief,who owned many possessions,and he was very happy. But one day,being drunk, he called her `the daughter of an ostrich egg`. That night he went to sleep as usual,and in the morning woke to find that everything had gone and he was a poor man again."

On page 114: "...Another primitive people,the Herero of South West Africa,have a clan of the Ostrich Egg Girdle,who regard it as an honour to wear a belt of these huge shells: here the eggs have clearly become the tribal totem."

Concerning the use of ostrich eggs to ward off evil: ,on pages 149-150: "...But perhaps the most interesting examples of this are the ostrich eggs that hang in churches,monasteries and mosques all over the Middle East and also in Africa: some have been stuck sideways to ornament the minarets of the mud mosque at Mopti (Mali). They also appear in Spain-perhaps relics of the Moorish Conquest-and can be seen in the Cathedral Church at Burgos,and in the Franciscan Convent at Sasiola, where they dangle beside the images of St Francis and Diego de Alcalá. Moselms rationalize this custom by saying that these eggs are symbols of God`s watchful care.Traditionally the ostrich hatched her eggs by looking at them:

*Oh! Even with such a look,as fables say,*

*The mother ostrich fixes on her eggs,*

*Till that intense affection*

*Kindle its light of life (Robert Southey `Thalaba`, iii,Poetical Works,London, 1849,IV.95 xxiv)*

Page 152: " While visiting Leeuwarden,Friesland,in the spring of 1965,I noticed an interesting ostrich egg inside the local museum. It hangs in a reconstructed apothecary`s shop,suspended on a cord,and carved scenes represent people gathering medicinal herbs. Since this seems to be an isolated example, it was perhaps a curiosity,brought back and decorated by some traveller from the Middle East. But equally it may have served as an emblem of the early chemist`s healing art.

Page 172: " Old Syrian burial memorials show eggs as part of a funeral feast. Barondes,describing the Michaux Stone,an egg-shaped rock covered with Assyrian writing,says the idea of this derives from decorated ostrich eggs."

Page 175,concerning ostrich eggs: “One,mentioned in the inventory of Mainz Cathedral,came from a sixteenth-century church in Halle. A traveller to the Holy Land in 1662 noticed ostrich eggs hanging directly above the Sepulchre of Our Lord,and in Rumania they are traditionally placed in any church which is a necropolis ;at Sucevita Monastery one hangs from a chandelier close to the founder`s tomb…”

Page 304: “Eggs also appear as water-containers. Among the Bushmen in South-West Africa ostrich egg-shells,sometimes inscribed with geometrical patterns,are employed in this way…”

Page 319: “...an Arabian tree on which the people of Mecca hung weapons,garlands and ostrich eggs is identified with the acacia of Nakhla,dwelling place of the goddess Al-`Ozza…”

Carved ostrich egg (17th Century) Wikipedia Creative Commons

# Shark with giant bite on its body

## https://www.indiatimes.com/trending/environment/great-white-shark-photographed-with-huge-mystery-bite-mark-on-its-body-558105.html

**India Times web site  Thanks to Shane Lea**

**December 31st 2021**

"A giant great white shark has been photographed with a massive bite mark on its body which scientists believe to have been caused by a mystery beast.

Jalil Najafov, 40, was diving in Isla Guadalupe, Mexico when he spotted the nearly five metre shark. He was shocked by the massive bite mark on its side, and was left pondering as to what could have left such a scar, *The Sun* reported. Jalil, a shark conservationist and filmmaker, said that he had never seen anything like this before.

"I was really surprised as I have never seen anything like this in my life. This bite mark was so huge on a big shark, and I was like, is that real? I have worked with sharks for many years and have never seen such a big scar before," Jalil, who is originally from Azerbaijan, was quoted as saying by *The Sun*…"

# Rediscovery of Japanese Axolotyl

## https://japan-forward.com/amusing-japanese-amphibian-discovered-for-first-time-in-89-years/

**Japan Forward  December 24th 2021  Thanks to Shane Lea**

Found again! Pure curiosity and careful observation led to the rediscovery of the wooper looper, or Japanese axolotl, by a Hokkaido University professor and his students.

"A Japanese version of the axolotl – an amusing amphibian with a round head and small eyes native to Mexico – has been discovered in Japan for the first time in 89 years.

The discovery was made after painstaking research by Hokkaido University. The little critters went on public display on December 14, 2021.

The amphibian has gills that resemble a mane, enabling it to breathe underwater. Yet, it is unable to live on land in its neotenic state. It is thought that a similar animal existed in Japan until the early Showa era, but then went off the radar due to environmental changes, taking on a phantom-like existence…"

# Yowie sighting in Queensland

**Thanks to Shane Lea**

**https://www.news.com.au/technology/science/animals/three-men-share-details-of-yowie-sighting-in-rural-queensland/news-story/a9c3629d4c171e8f31fcf038308eb426**

## Three men share details of 'yowie sighting' in rural Queensland  December 14th 2021

Three men in Queensland have claimed they came across a "yowie" while driving home from work.

*The Courier Mail* reported the three plantation workers were driving on Saturday, December 4, to the Jimna Base Camp when they allegedly spotted "slouched over figure" under a street light. The men said the figure noticed them and turned in their direction.

"We initially thought it was a boar or a really big animal until we got closer and saw it run off in a very apelike way,"

Seamus FitzGerald said via the Brisbane publication, describing the mysterious figure as having “very long arms” and an “apelike” face

“I’ve never really had a paranormal or strange experience like that before. I hardly slept that night and the feeling was overwhelming that I had seen something that I never believed in previously.”

Workmate Stirling Slocock-Bennett said the group was immediately confused when it crossed paths with the unknown entity.

“We were in utter disbelief of what we were seeing,” he said.

# Very rare insect discovered

**https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/941196**

**January 27th 2022**

**Thanks to Shane Lea**

## New species of ‘incredibly rare’ insect discovered

The closest relative to this newly discovered leafhopper was last spotted in 1969

“A British scientist has discovered a new species that belongs to a group of insects so rare that its closest relative was last seen in 1969.

Dr Alvin Helden of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) found the new species of leafhopper, which he has named *Phlogis kibalensis*, during field work with students in the rainforest of the Kibale National Park in western Uganda, and the discovery has been announced in the journal *Zootaxa*.

The new species, which has a distinctive metallic sheen, pitted body, and, in common with most leafhoppers, uniquely-shaped male reproductive organs – in this case partially leaf-shaped – belongs to a group,

or genus, called *Phlogis*…"

# Is the Buff-breasted button-quail still alive?

**https://theconversation.com/is-the-buff-breasted-button-quail-still-alive-after-years-of-searching-this-century-old-bird-mystery-has-yet-to-be-solved-175647 February 3rd 2022 Thanks to Shane Lea**

"In humid savanna on Cape York Peninsula, February 5, 1922, a man was on the hunt with a local Indigenous guide. They had just heard their quarry calling among the tall grass – a low "oomm, oomm, oomm" – before it burst into view with a flurry of wingbeats. A loud shotgun blast, and the bird dropped to the ground.

The bird was a buff-breasted button-quail, and the collector was Australian field naturalist William Rae McLennan. Later that evening he would have skinned and stuffed the bird, turning it into a museum specimen, before describing the encounter in his diary.

This skin was the last of the species ever collected. A century later, we have still yet to confirm any sightings of this mysterious, native bird.

I've spent four years searching for the buff-breasted button-quail, walking hundreds of kilometres and spending months scouring practically every locality where the species had ever been reported. All I've been able to find is its more common cousin: the painted button-quail.

Still, my ongoing research has brought us a step closer to solving this mystery and I remain hopeful the bird is still in existence. If it is, it urgently needs our help.

Below; © British Newspaper Archive

Winsford Chronicle May 12th 1956

Large and small white and Holly Blue butterflies are on the wing a little later than usual, as oft times the Large White is on the wing by the middle of April.

"But green leaves and blossoms
and sunny, warm weather
And singing and loving—all come
back together."—*Coleridge.*

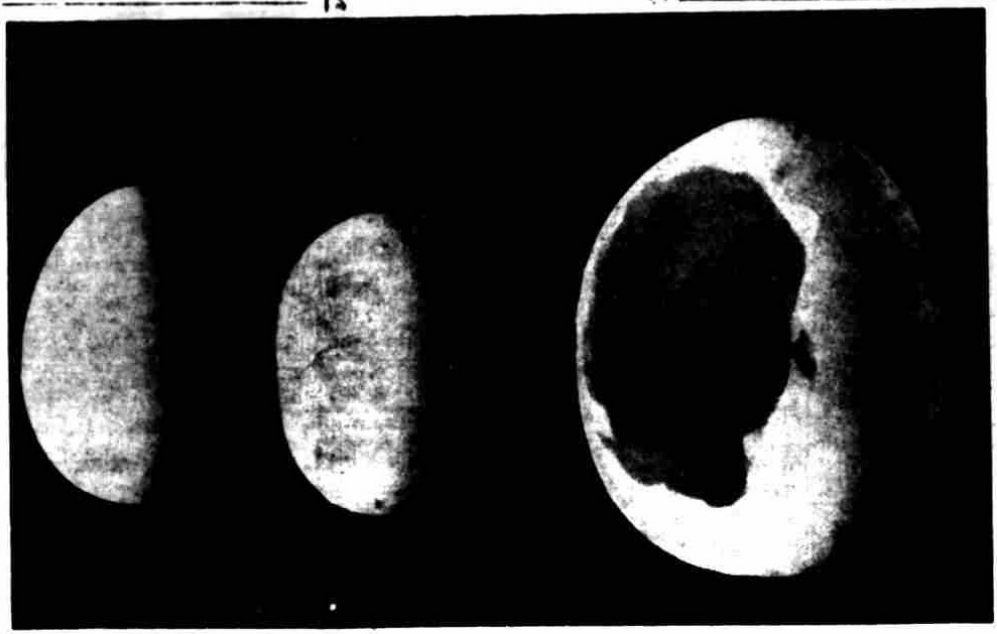
GO

# MONSTER EGG

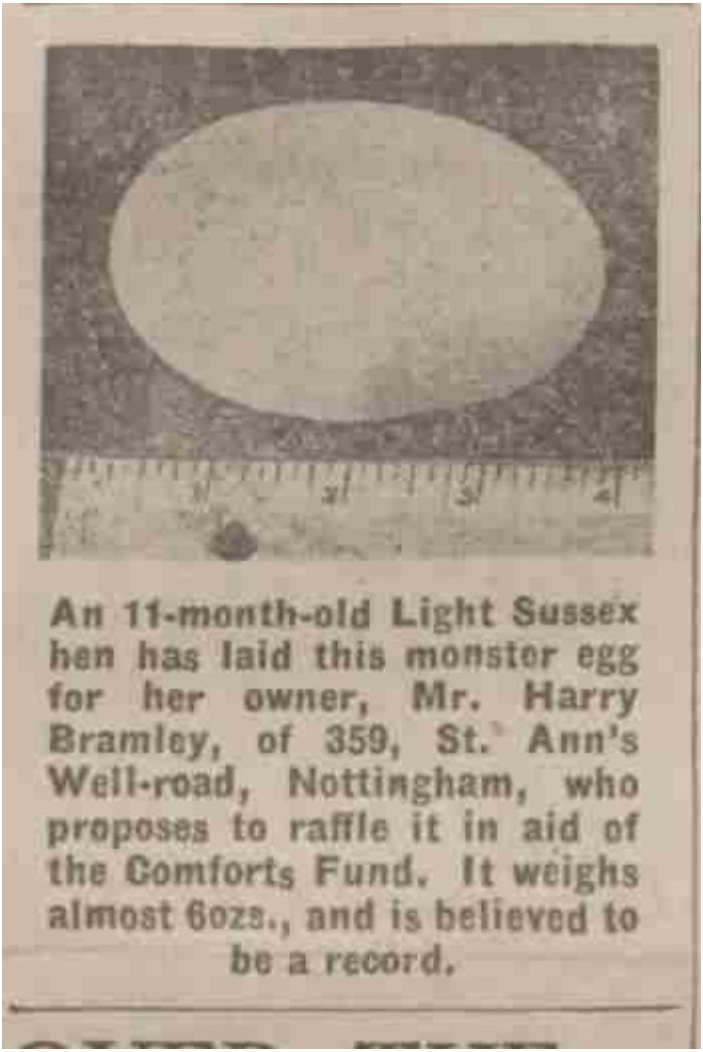
Evans had a dry ginger. "That was

was seated next to her husband.

Aneurin Evans, labour and welfare manager, at the time of the accident living at Woodlands, Moss-lane Allostock, but now c/o Mr. Dickenson Lamb Cottage, Daleford-lane, Whitegate, said that as far as he remembered he was seated on the nearside and Mrs. Southerton was next to her husband. Mr. Southerton's driving



*Mr. and Mrs. George Thelwell, Forest Gate, Kingsley, recently found this monster egg laid by one of their Sussex-Brown Leghorn hens. The egg, 3½" long and 8" in circumference, weighed five ounces. Inside was a normal size egg (centre of picture). On the left in comparison is a normal size egg.*



An 11-month-old Light Sussex hen has laid this monster egg for her owner, Mr. Harry Bramley, of 359, St. Ann's Well-road, Nottingham, who proposes to raffle it in aid of the Comforts Fund. It weighs almost 6ozs., and is believed to be a record.

© British Newspaper Archive

Nottingham Evening Post

June 21st 1943

# Both a male and female stick-insect

## BBC web-site February 16th 2022

### https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-60375172

"A pet stick insect surprised its owner when she noticed it was half male and half female - known as a gynandromorph.Charlie, a green bean stick insect, showed its true colours after it shed its skin at home in Suffolk to reveal the bright green body of a female and brown wings of a male.Experts at the Natural History Museum confirmed it was the "first reported gynandromorph" in that species.Charlie was also a "particularly impressive specimen", they said.Owner Lauren Garfield has donated her pet to the museum in London for scientific research…"

# Flying lizards in Papua New Guinea

## Thanks to Mike Hardcastle

This story appears thanks to Mike Hardcastle who found it in a book called Journey into the Stone Age by David Davies. It concerns flying lizards in Papua New Guinea ,which is interesting because if they were Draco Volans,this is well south of the range of their "recognised" distribution. However back in Flying Snake Vol 1 number 1 we documented reports of flying lizards in Australia. According to Davies (page 14) :" The only reptiles that I ever saw were lizards of about four inches long, with a copper sheen to their skin,that, I gathered, fed on the beetles that hid everywhere,and green flying lizards…" And on page 145: "One hardly saw it go,but there it was on another tree, carried I suppose, like the cuc-cus, by membranes between its legs, showing itself to be one of the huge `flying lizards.` It resumed its `song` almost immediately, as if nothing had happened…"

Draco Volans. Wikipedia Creative Commons

# A possible lynx in South Wiltshire in 1995?

**South Wiltshire June 1st 1995**

**New theory on big cat**

A Redlynch woman thinks that South Wiltshire`s mystery big cat could be a lynx after she saw it at close quarters on Monday.

Angela Churchill, of Yew Tree Cottage,was on the path behind Woodfalls Farm,Redlynch,when the cat suddenly appeared. “It was about 3pm and we were just walking along talking when my friend saw it jump out of a hedge. “I looked up to see it standing in the path about 15 yards away from us. It stared at us for a few seconds and then just strolled away out of sight.” “Normally I would have had my dog with me but fortunately I didn`t on this occasion,otherwise goodness knows what would have happened. “The cat was about the size of a spaniel dog, very black with three tabby stripes near the front and it had a long tail and pointed ears. It looked like a lynx. There have now been more than a dozen local sightings of the big cat,which has often been described as looking like a panther. That is what Jennifer Edmett,of Youngs Paddock,Winterslow thought it could have been when she saw the mystery animal crossing the London road near the Little Chef on Saturday night. It loped across the dual carriageway towards Firsdown,she said. “I saw it clearly from the car. It was bigger than a cat or dog and was certainly not a badger or fox either,” said Mrs Edmett.

# Freak Fish

## Old Australian newspaper

An extraordinary fish was landed by a couple of brothers when netting in Lake Weyba,near Tewantin (Qld). Oldest residents of the district had never seen anything like it before,and so far it seems to be a freak of nature. Something like a fresh-water cod,its body had not a scale on it. Short in the body and tail, it looked almost like a toad,while its face was more or less like that of an ugly bulldog.

# Flying lizard in London

FLYING LIZARD?

**Strange Visitor from Borneo Pays a Startling Call at Twickenham.**

A strange visitor to these shores has been seen at Twickenham. A lady residing in Lebanon Park, while standing at her front door, was alarmed to find a reptile 18in. long close beside her.

It watched a number of butterflies, and then approached them with a swift movement. Suddenly, to the astonishment of the onlooker, it spread wings, rose quickly from the ground, and, with amazing swiftness, caught and consumed all the butterflies, and then flew away.

Mr. C. W. Pittard, of Lebanon Park, whose sister saw the reptile, is of opinion that it was a flying lizard similar to those found in Java and Borneo.

Sunday Mirror September 4th 1921 © British Newspaper Archive

# Attacks by giant owl in Norwich

**https://www.express.co.uk/news/nature/1578249/owl-news-attack-norwich-norfolk-news-carrow-road-hattie-atkinson-smith?fbclid=IwAR0XR3STjcdwanORyV2QP0BREhFNTW-PTm4cLd_XD70vNjvT873UM8iCL18**

## March 10th 2022 Express web site

**Jogger attacked by giant escaped OWL that swooped on pony-tail' and tried to eat her**

“A FEMALE jogger has described being attacked by a "giant" owl which she said swooped on her ponytail and tried to eat her.Hattie Atkinson Smith, 27, said the bird of prey seized her hair during her daily workout on a riverside path in Norwich. The data scientist explained she was jogging near Norwich City's Carrow Road ground when she felt what she thought at the time was a hand on the back of her head.She turned around and saw to her horror a "massive bird" attacking her. She managed to shake it off before sprinting to safety…”

# A Wolf in the Forest of Dean

## https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/gloucester-news/man-frozen-encountered-well-built-6815244 March 20th 2022

## Gloucester Live web site

## Man froze when he encountered `well built` wolf in the Forest of Dean

A man has spoken of his shock after a chilling encounter with a wolf in Gloucestershire. Chris Howard, from Yorkley, in the Forest of Dean, is convinced by what he saw which left him frozen in fear.

He was walking along a path near woodlanmd and he stopped in his tracks when he heard a stick snap in the darkness. He shone his torch towards where the sound came from and saw the wolf just 15 metres away.Despite being frightened by what he saw, he feels privileged at at the encounter. However, he warns others who walk in the area to be cautious Mr Howard said: “I take my terrier out every night so we do not come across other people and their dogs. So last Sunday after dinner at 8.30pm I took him for his walk.

“I was walking up the path and was just concerned if we were to come across wild boar but I have not seen any in the area for a while now. We were near a residential area about 100 yards away from the houses

walking along the ash path which runs along the wooded area. I heard a crack in the woods thinking it may be a boar. I shone my torch and I saw a wolf with it's nose down to the ground and then it looked at me."

Mr Howard instantly froze. He could not believe what he was seeing. He said: "What I saw was one million per cent a wolf. It had a long snout, big head and was well built from it's neck to it's rear end…"

A brief search on the Internet revealed a previous sighting of a wolf near The Forest of Dean in October 2021: See **https:// www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/gloucester-news/wolf-sighting-near-forest-dean-6151117** on the Gloucestershire Live web site on November 6th 2021:

"A Gloucestershire woman driving home late night after netball said she was staggered to see a wolf saunter slowly across the road and disappear into a thicket.

The sighting happened in Monmouth. at around 9.15pm on October 26 last week, after the witness's sat-nav took her on a unusual detour on her way home. Ria Seward, 29, from Sedbury, said: "I had been to play netball in Monmouth and I was following the sat-nav to get me home, but I did not recognise they way it had been taking me that night.

"It was a very rural detour on the B4293 in Coleford and it was pitch black.

"I had my full beam lights on and the wolf saw me before I saw it. I was literally 10 feet away from it…"

# A furry green snake in Thailand

## Thanks to Bob Skinner for this story

## Weekly Weird News March 4th 2022

"A Thai animal keeper found an interesting snake specimen in a swampy area in Sakhan Nakhan province. A video of the animal was posted to social media. It shows a water snake covered in what appears to be green hair. It's quite strange and striking leading people to speculate about it being a previously unknown animal, a hoax, or a genuine anomaly. When I couldn't find any credible info in the articles online, I posted to my knowledgeable Twitter neighborhood asking for professional input about the furry snake. More than one person said the snake was covered with green "hair" algae. Normally the snake would shed and this would not be an issue, but there may be some problem with this animal where it cannot shed or that the algae growth was particularly rapid. Another helpful commenter (thank you Tangmo Mopet!) provided the link to the type of snake in the video. Thai wildlife investigator Nick Chomngam posted to his YouTube channel a video showing him examining the snake in person. He identifies it as *Homalopsis nigroventralis* (Deuve's Water Snake, also known as "Deuve's Mud Snake" or the "Mekong Masked Water Snake"). The video is in Thai, so I miss his commentary, but it definitely is an algae issue. This snake inhabits stagnant waters loaded with algae growth that seems to have coated the scales of the snake, but not its belly. Other snakes in shallow water environments may also experience algae growth but this is an extreme case. In this clip, you can see that bits of algae are freed when the snake moves. https://www.newsflare.com/video/481445/mystery-green-furry-snake-found-floating-in-swamp-in-thailand

Thanks so much to all who helped gather this information!"

# Weird Egg

The Bee, Eardington, April 10th,1924

## DON'T TOTE A PISTOL.

### His Death Was Predicted by a Turkey Egg-

Pistol carriers should take warning by the fate of a Kentuckian recently departed this life. On a turkey egg laid in his barn he found written the date of his birth and the date upon which he was to die. On the day fixed for his death his pistol slipped from his pocket while he was stooping and was discharged, instantly killing him. But for his having had a pistol in his clothes, the turkey egg prediction would have failed, but the roof might have fallen.

**Thanks to Bob Skinner for the above story**

**Giant Bat 'The Advertiser (South Australia) June 9th 1938**
"Another specimen which we shall seek is the giant white bat of the Mac-Donnell Ranges. This fearsome-looking creature is of a cream-white hue. and has a wing spread of nearly 30 inches. It inhabits the caves in this line of mountains, and certain caves in Queensland. A living specimen has never been exhibited. We hope to bring back one of these bats alive."

# A Macau Crocodile

# The Japan Weekly Chronicle 13 September 1906 p. 327.

We have much pleasure in announcing that the paragraph recently appearing in these columns describing the capture, death, and mastication of the sea-serpent is without foundation. The Sea-serpent still lives. The Macao Corresspondent of the Hongkong Daily Press communicates the following, under date August 30th:-"This morning as the bathers were as usual having their dip on the beach opposite the Bay View House a strange animal of several feet in length was observed by those on the sands. The bathers were at once apprised of the danger, and they immediately quitted the water. The animal appeared like a crocodile and was about ten or twelve feet long. Spokesmen are keeping a watch for this monster, which was scenewhat intimidated and reduced the usual crowd of bathers in this much frequented spot." It is disappointing, however, to learn that the monster was only estimated at 144 inches in length---this must be a "gross under-estimate.

# An entombed bat

## Thanks to Bob Skinner

### FATE May, 1988.

**Stonewalled Bat by Dwight Walen**

During renovations at St. James Church in Guelph, Ontario, in 1915, a mason removing some foundation stones discovered a bat imbedded in a wall. "It was covered with limestone and mortar," reported the Kingston (Ont.) Whig for March 25, "and the man naturally thought the bat was dead, but when he picked it up it felt warm and it was breathing. Mr. Art Hicks took charge of it and put it in a box and later took it home with him. He put a glass over the box with a space left for air and decided to watch it. During the night, however, the bat got out and began to fly around the house. "Mr. Hicks got up, turned on the light and endeavored to capture [the creature] but it got out of the window, and he thought that was the last of the bat. The following morning, however, when a member of the household went to shake a mat which was on the doorstep, the bat was found clinging to it, and it and it was killed and put into the stove, much to Mr Hicks' regret. He says the bat was quite fat when found but that it was very weak and could not have lived much longer. "There are no windows or other openings near where it was found" the newspaper concluded, "and the wall was erected 23 years ago."

# letters and e-mails

# A Wolf in Somerset

Flying Snake reader David John sent me this account of his encounter with a possible wolf in Somerset in the 1990s:

E-mail dated February 13th 2022:

"Well my memory is somewhat hazy, despite (ironically) my interest in Forteana and cryptozoology. However, it would have been around late summer time circa 1995. I then lived in Taunton, and had been out that evening to see a friend. Coming back home (after 10pm, so it was dark) I was coming down the Ilminster bypass to join the A358 up to Taunton when I encountered an unexpected queue of traf-fic. Fearing an accident ahead, I took to one of the side roads off the A358 (most likely towards Broadway, or Hastings) with the intention

> It was pitch black off the main road, so I was driving with full beam on and down narrow roads - some single tracks, some barely wide enough for two cars. At some point in the early part of this journey I recall travelling down a typically narrow road at around 30-40mph when right across the road in front of me (from my left to right) ran a large grey/white coloured animal. It went from out of the hedgerow to my left, across the road, and into what I think was a field on my right, though another hedge. I was driving an Austin Montego at the time and the animal looked big - close to the car, I'd estimate no more than 10' at the nearest point to me - and the body of the animal was appreciably visible over the top of the bonnet of the car, such was it's height. I don't recall seeing legs, just the side of the body. It moved very fast, so I really only caught a look at the flank as it passed, but I was struck by both the height, speed and colour of the animal in the

headlights. Not only was it 'tall' but it looked substantial too, in terms of the length of the body. I guess the main recollection I have is for a split second the entire front width of the car seemed to be full of the view of this animal, and to some considerable height above the bonnet too.

My general sense was canine not feline, it seemed to have grey fur with lighter colouration in it (but then the main beam would have been on so that might reasonably bleach the colours a little in the split seconds I had to see it). It was near enough to me to make me brake suddenly, and the speed of the animal took it from one side to the other in only a few seconds so I was never close to hitting it.

In hindsight it could have been something big and domestic crossing fields, though I was not particularly near villages from memory. It really did strike me as wolf-like both in colour and size, and certainly not like a deer or something like that.

If only we'd had dashcams back in those days!

Sorry, not a huge amount of detail but hopefully something of interest for you.

Regards, David

# Letters to Fate

## Thanks to Gary Mangiacopra

## Fate November 1961 Volume 14,Issue 140

### Red Hot House

We don`t know whether this falls under the heading of lightning but the Manchester, New Hampshire,Union Leader reports a mystery from Alstead,New Hampshire,that had the entire fire department standing by feeling pretty helpless.

It seems there was a heavy electrical storm on Sunday,July 23,in the vicinity of Alstead and shortly afterwards the fire department was called to the home of Mrs. Mable Metcalf. There was no fire,no smoke and the men could not find a short circuit.

But the walls of the Metcalf home,says the Union Leader,were almost "red hot" to the touch.

Firemen sprayed the house with water and went back to see whether the walls had cooled off. They were still "red hot". The firemen laid out extra hose and stationed a tanker by the home and sat around waiting for the walls to cool off. Apparently they did,some time after midnight.

## Fate November 1961 Volume 14, Issue 140

### Strange Rain

C.K.Carter Jr., of the Carter Construction Company,of Shreveport, Louisiana,was working with several carpenters on a house at 2065 Lovers Lane,on Wednesday,July 12. Several of the men were on the

roof when the wind blew in a dark cloud and things began to fall.

What do you think they were? Peaches!

Carter said the peaches were about the size of a silver dollar. When the cloud passed on it left some two dozen of them in an area about a half block long and 200 feet wide. Some were ripe and some were green. Mrs John W.Goodwin,of 2062 Shadywood Lane, has her yard directly behind the one where the carpenters were working. She found four of the peaches around her house. A spokesman for the Weather Bureau said that it was possible for a “terrific updraft” to carry something the size of peaches aloft during thunderstorm activity but conditions in Shreveport were hardly suitable for that on this particular day.

It would be a difficult thing to convince Mr C.K.Carter,Jr., his carpenters,or Mrs. Goodwin,however,that the peaches did not fall. Rains of toads are a lot more common than rains of peaches,and skeptics who consider such things carefully (without actually experiencing them, of course) assure us that toads don`t really fall but that they are buried underground and the rain just brings them out.

Since peaches don`t grow underground as far as we know,they`re a bit harder to explain.

Recently H.R.Newman,Jr., sent us a clipping from the Stanley,North Carolina,News and Press that tells about an invasion of toads at the Cecil Moose home on Norwood Road a mile south of Albemarle.

After the rain shower Mr. Moose walked outside and he found his driveway,garden, and a nearby field literally jumping with tiny toads. They were about a half inch long and there were thousands of them covering a good acre of ground around his home. Next day they were still so thick it was impossible to walk without crushing them. Of course they could have come from a pond not very far away.

# Fate December 1961 Volume 14, Issue 141

## Rain of Birds

Whatever mysterious signals cause birds to migrate or guide them on mass long-distance flights went awry one night last August in Capitol,California.

Patrolman Ed Cunningham said the birds began falling out of the fog at 2.30 AM. Within half an hour ,he had to stop his patrol car to avoid running over them. He was afraid to get out of the car to investigate.”They fell so fast they could have knocked me down and out”. The birds were Sooty Shearwaters, a kind of petrel that spends most of its life at sea. They are large birds, 18 inches long with a wingspread of about 33 inches. They nest in Tasmania and south Australia and spend the rest of their time offshore circumnavigating the Pacific Ocean,flying low and feeding on anchovy and squid.

From Capitola through Pleasure Point and Cliffside and on to West Cliff Drive, a distance of five miles,the shores and high points were covered with the birds. They thudded into houses,smashed into power poles,TV antennas and skylights. Their impact severed a power line on Merrill Avenue near Capitola. The bombardment ceased with dawn. Highways were covered with carcasses. At least 4,000 Sooty Shearwaters were killed outright. Another 2,000 wobbled around, apparently unable to take off from land. When hauled to the water,however,they flew away. One theory is that the birds were attracted by the city lights,another that they were sick, another that they had eaten something which made them dizzy. But why hasn`t Capitola had other similar invasions before?

# Fate December 1961 Volume 14,Issue 141

## Duke`s Triumph

Porpoises are smart but they are not domesticated. Some dogs are both. Last March 15 a five-year old collie named Duke was playing with his 10-year old mistress,Penny Grantz in Niles,Ohio.

Penny`s skirt caught fire and she ran toward the house.Duke intercepted her, seized the flaming skirt in his jaws and tore it off the child. Doctor`s say that Duke “almost certainly” saved Penny`s life.

In August Duke was named dog hero of the year in Chicago. He received a gold medal for his collar and a $1,000 U.S. bond in Penny`s name, plus other gifts.

# Fate March 1962 Volume 15,Issue 144

## Polly Came Back

Mabel E.Stafford

Albuquerque, New Mexico

I have three parrots, the last of which lived to be 16 years old. She was a wonderful bird. The kids came every day and asked if Polly could come out to play with them. She never made any loud noise while in the house with me, but she loved kids and while playing with them could holler as much as she liked.

While taking care of a sick man,I left Polly with friends and she chewed a large hole in a wooden mail box. If I had been home I am certain I could have saved her, but since I was away she died. The children buried her with flowers. I am a Spiritualist and one evening was in the church early. As God is my judge,Polly landed on the back of a chair next to me. I was startled. She flew and circled the room and then was gone. She was as real as life. So I know birds do live on after death.

# Fate July 1962, Volume 15, number 7, Issue 148

## Frog Rain Theory

Paul Henderson

Dickinson, North Dakota

I have a theory concerning raining of frogs, although I won`t go so far as to say it doesn`t rain frogs, for I believe it is possible. But I do know that frogs will dig themselves into the ground during dry weather and come out after rain.

I am a native of Florida and made part of my living frog hunting for several years. My father-in-law and I have gone out and hunted ponds at night after a big rain. Ponds which had been bone dry the night before will contain many, many frogs after the rain. I have felt thousands of holes in the ground where the frogs came out from dry weather hibernation.

As for fish, here is something I saw once while working at Carlstrom Field in Arcadia, Florida ,during World War II. We had asphalt ramps where we parked the airplanes. It had been very dry for over a year and all the small streams had dried up. But one day a cloud came up which resulted in an electric storm and one of the hardest downpours I had ever witnessed. After the rain was over we all started out to the line to take the cockpit covers off the planes. One of the crew yelled and motioned for the rest of us to come and see something on the ground. We thought he had run onto a snake. But instead there was a space of about 50 feet up and down the ramp in front of the hanger that literally was covered with small fish. I venture to say there would have been at least a 10-quart pail full. They were mostly large minnows and small perch. Fifteen other crew members saw this, besides myself, and if it didn`t rain the fish down I can`t see how they got there.

# Fate May 1961,Volume 14,Number 5,Issue 134

## Balls of Fire

Hundreds of sightseers have been swarming to the marsh country around Saratoga,Texas,to watch the fireballs. They bounce around the Big Thicket swampland at night and late in the summer Bragg Road,north of Saratoga,where the fireballs were seen more frequently,was crowded with sightseers.

Things got so thick that Sheriff Whit Whitaker had to post an order prohibiting firearms in the area. Some sightseers were attempting to shoot the fireballs out of the air.

In case you wonder what the fireballs are,any scientist can tell you.Dr Edwin Hays,head of the biology department of Lamar State College of Technology ,in Beaumont,Texas,explains that they are caused by “swamp gas” ignited by spontaneous combustion. Such balls of fire,says Dr. Hays,are not uncommon in marsh country.

We would like to challenge Dr. Hays and every other proponent to this old chestnut of a theory to prove it. A common scientific criticism of psychic phenomena is that it is not repeatable under laboratory conditions. Well, we are challenging the swamp gas theorists to produce a little swamp gas under laboratory conditions,ignite it spontaneously,and produce their own little fireballs that go bouncing merrily along for minutes at a time.

Under laboratory conditions or any other conditions!

# Fate May 1961,Volume 14,Number 5,Issue 134,

### Giant lizards in Malaya

We close with a note that the Royal Air Force has reported sighting dragon-size lizards with wicked-looking flat heads lolling in the sun on two small islands off the west coast of North Malaya. The RAF said the lizards were up to 14 feet in length-twice the length of the largest monitor lizards known and much bigger than the Komodo dragons,which live on islands of Indonesia. The Federation Game Department has launched an investigation. The islands are uninhabited. Now we know why.

# Fate April 1962, Volume 15,Number 4,Issue 145

### Suicidal Fish

Along the coast of New South Wales,Australia,from Evans Head to Iluka, south of Sydney,ichthyologists were presented with a new mystery last December– the fish were trying to climb ashore to die.

Millions of fish,including snappers up to 20 pounds in weight,10-to-20 pound groupers,bream,yellowfish,mackeral and pilchards were swimming in toward shore with their heads out of water and hurling themselves on the beach. When they are thrown back they swam ashore again to die. Lester Cribb,chairman of the fisherman`s cooperative board, said he never had seen anything like it in his 40 years in the fishing industry. “The fish seem to hate water and there`s no explaining it,” Cribb said. Some people complained of a strong smell from the sea –and not one from rotting fish either. They thought this might have something to do with it. And 30 women handling the prawn catch at Evans Head complained of severe headaches, though they are 150 yards from the beach. Local residents were warned not to eat the fish.

# Fate May 1962,Volume 15,Number 5,Issue 146

## Amazing Denizens of the Sea

Continuing reports of sea serpents and other mysterious marine creatures strongly suggest that the waters of the sea harbor a variety of unknown forms of life. From the Isle of Man ,an island off England`s west coast ,come reports of mermaids. The mayor of the town of Peel, a woman, says she once saw a red-headed mermaid basking on the rocks off Peel Castle. Another inhabitant of the island, Roy MacDonald,claims he once saw not one, but two, red-headed mermaids swimming about five miles off shore. He was out fishing, he said, when he saw the two figures moving through the water at a speed of about 12 knots. He asserted that no human being could swim at such speed. The figures vanished before he could haul up his anchor and follow them. Helen Cowell,23, a secretary, reported sighting a mermaid– a brunette, this time-three miles south of Peel. She stated that the mermaid, sitting on a rock in true mermaid fashion, was about three and a half feet long. Miss Cowell was unable to see the mermaid`s tail, but did observe that she "had a lovely figure."

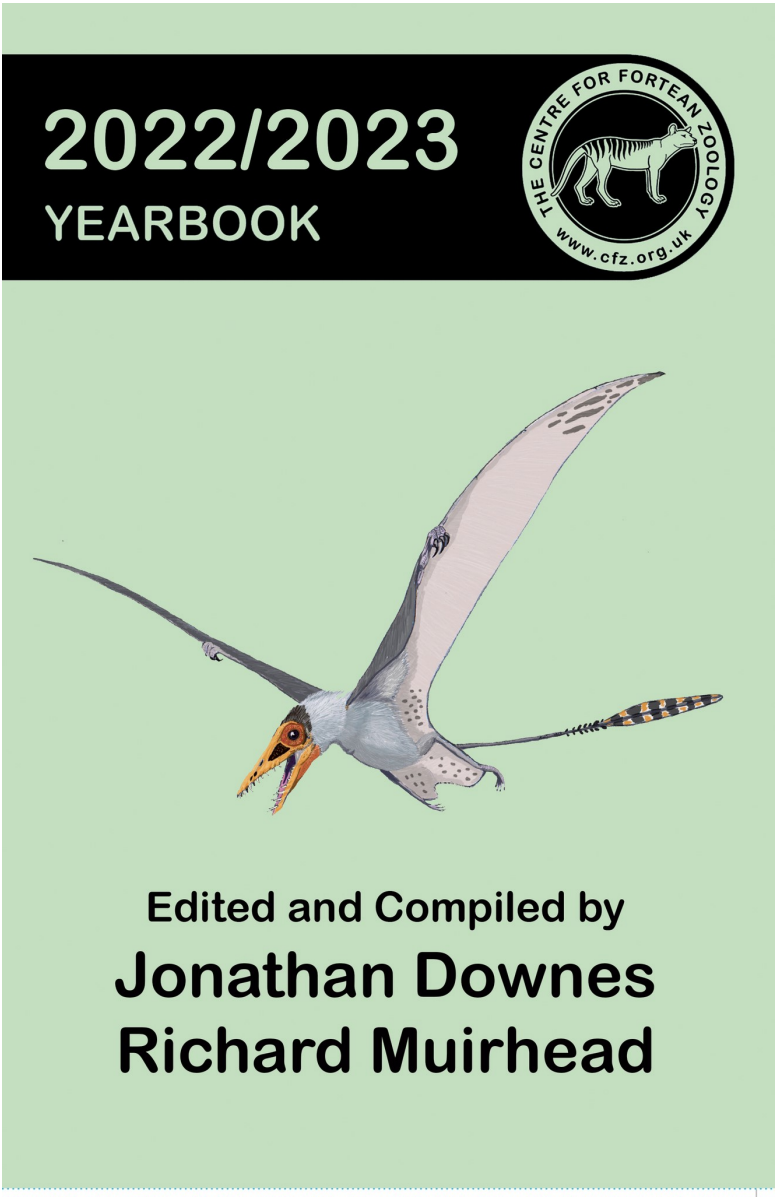
Harry and Warren Heath,brothers, reported seeing a strange marine animal "about 14 to 16 feet long, with a black and white head" off Manchester,Massachusetts. The Heaths,who are fishermen, said the creature surfaced about 30 feet away from their boat as they hauled in lobster traps. Harry Heath described the mystery animal as having two proturbant eyes and a ridged black back. After a few minutes, he said, the creature submerged.

# Book Review

## Of Books and Beasts A Cryptozoologist`s Library Matt Bille Hangar 1 Publishing 2021

I am happy to recommend this book as a vital addition to any serious cryptozoologist`s library. Bille in this book provides a thorough and up to date summary, as the title suggests ,of all the most useful books pertaining not only to cryptozoology in the narrowest definition of that term, but also disciplines such as evolution and also cryptozoology in fiction. Some people will not be pleased that he has excluded a paranormal approached to cryptozoology but personally I am pleased that Bille sticks with flesh and blood mystery creatures as there is enough material there to satisfy all but the most partisan of observers. As Bille says in his Introduction: " Cryptozoological hypotheses can be proven false ,even though the resources needed to disprove a proposition like "There is an unknown Himalayan ape species" may not be available. This quality of cryptozoology is why it should not be included under the heading of "the paranormal," which contains much that cannot be proven false."

Bille`s book is divided into four sections and an afterword. The four sections cover A Basic Library of Cryptozoology, Primates,Land Animals,Lake and Sea Creatures ,then Others. Section Two covers Related Sciences, Section 3 covers Crypto-Fiction, and Section Four deals with A Marvelous Miscellany. The Afterwords cover Cryptids and Me and A Few Contributions of My Own. The book is selling at a price of between £20.83 and £37.71 on Bookfinder.com as of May 10th 2022.




**Available on Amazon and from the Centre for Fortean Zoology UK**